

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Solzhenitsyn, Kissinger and Detente

Less than two days before being denounced by Dr. Henry Kissinger as a threat to world peace, Alexander Solzhenitsyn spurned a request for a secret meeting with the Secretary of State delivered, along with flattery, by high-level emissary Nelson A. Rockefeller.

Whether that counter-snob led to Kissinger's sharp attack on Solzhenitsyn is unclear, but there is no doubt that Kissinger, master diplomat of the age, bungled his handling of the Russian Nobel laureate from the moment he advised President Ford not to see Solzhenitsyn June 30. The dreary postscript came Wednesday when Kissinger, following his attack on the Soviet exile, made an extraordinary but unsuccessful attempt to hold back criticism from Sen. Henry Jackson.

Kissinger's peace offering came last Monday night at a small, unpublicized dinner party in Solzhenitsyn's honor at the Washington home of Lane Kirkland, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer. Principal guests were George Meany, President of the AFL-CIO, and Vice President Rockefeller (who checked with Mr. Ford before accepting).

Rockefeller, longtime AFL-CIO ally, is a staunch anti-Communist who later told aides he enjoyed "a delightful evening." But he is also a Kissinger intimate. So, before the party ended at 11:30 p.m., the Vice President informed Solzhenitsyn of Kissinger's high regard for him and his novels. He was sure, said Rockefeller, that Kissinger would like to meet with Solzhenitsyn—in private, of course.

"Nyet," replied the wary Russian. No private meetings.

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Solzhenitsyn also was dodging feelers from President Ford that began July 12 when the White House backtracked on its original snub and reached a climax last Tuesday during Solzhenitsyn's triumphant reception on Capitol Hill.

Following the reception, Solzhenitsyn went to Sen. Jackson's office accompanied by Republican Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Helms was called from the room by this telephoned query from the White House: Could Helms bring Solzhenitsyn down the avenue right away to see the President? The answer from the novelist's interpreter, Victor Feday: "nyet." Solzhenitsyn was "hot and tired."

This was the background for Kissinger's press conference in Milwaukee Wednesday. He was sizzling over White House aides leaking criticism of his bad advice to the President. After repeated questioning about Solzhenitsyn, Kissinger defended his advice to Mr. Ford and attacked the survivor of Stalin's slave labor camps.

Kissinger had instant second thoughts, opening the long-closed communication

channel with arch-critic Jackson. State Department Counselor Helmut Sonnenfeldt, telephoning Jackson's office for the first time in six months, said Kissinger asked him to call. Would Jackson delay immediate comment until thoroughly reviewing the Milwaukee press conference? Too late. Jackson's harsh reaction had already been released.

Major development contracts with Japanese and Western European concerns to enlarge Iraq's small port at Um Qasr on the Persian Gulf are new signals of estrangement between the radical Baathist regime in Baghdad and the Soviet Union.

The contracts, moreover, coincide with Baghdad's increased cooperation with conservative Arab states and Iran—a chance of utmost importance affecting U.S.-Soviet competition for pre-eminence in the Persian Gulf oil waterways.

The Iraqi government signed a border agreement with Saudi Arabia on July 2, ending years of bitter enmity. More important, Iraq signed a major economic aid program with the once-hated royal-

ist regime of Jordan on June 26, the first agreement ever between two countries with antithetical regimes. Economic aid financed by Iraqi oil will help Jordan enlarge its port of Aqaba.

Iraq's decision to use only Western aid in developing Um Qasr is viewed by American experts as strategically critical. Moscow has long coveted Um Qasr for a naval base, smaller but similar to the large Soviet base being completed at the Somali port of Berbera. With the West now holding all Um Qasr development contracts, such a dangerous prospect seems eliminated.

The long-term campaign by Democratic National Chairman Robert Strauss of appealing to Middle America will result in a most unusual participant in the party's fund-raising telethon next weekend: Dr. Billy Graham, the fundamentalist preacher most recently linked politically with Richard M. Nixon.

The smooth-talking Strauss told Graham the American political system badly needs reaffirmation, and who could better reaffirm it than the nation's greatest evangelist?

Although Graham's recorded pitch carefully advocates every American giving to the party of his choice, the fact that he is appearing on a Democratic telethon will not be lost on the public. It could be the most effective fund appeal of the 22-hour telethon. Even blasé technicians at the Washington recording studio were brought to attention by the all-time leading fund-raiser on the evangelist circuit.

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